

Ditchmore Delegates Save Resource Centre!

It came out of the blue. Last September, those of us who happened to be in the building were called into a meeting by the Community Mental Health Team manager to be told that Ditchmore Lane Resource Centre (Ditchmore), run by the Community Support Team, was going to be closed in March 2009. There had been no discussion, none of the carers had been told and it was just as much of a shock for the staff as the service users. As part of its restructuring programme, Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust, (HPFT), had decided it was necessary to move the service into another building nearby and to close Ditchmore as a base for activities. There would not be room at the new building for service users to meet or join in group activities. Then came a series of 'consultations' but these were more a case of information giving sessions after the decision had already been made in contrast to HPFT's obligation to involve service users in the decision making process.

They served a purpose though: to galvanise us into action. We joined together as the 'Ditchmore Delegates' and contacted Barbara Follett MP, Viewpoint, Carers in Herts, the County Council and local councillors in Stevenage. We gained a reprieve until October 2009 but we wanted to save Ditchmore. We researched the costs and benefits of keeping it open. Closing Ditchmore would increase the risk of suicides and higher hospital admission rates and badly affect carers who rely on it

to give them a respite.

Then we realised the formal way of challenging the decision was through the Joint Commissioning Team (JCT) which pays for the services provided by HPFT.

The JCT holds regular public meetings where people can ask questions and receive a written response at a subsequent



Corinne, Gerry, Carol, Tony, Wendy and Paul

'This place has given me my life back. Before I came here I used to be constantly in and out of hospital.' Gerry Walsh

'I don't think the staff realise how valuable they are to me and how much they are loved and trusted. Recovery is happening at a very slow pace and hopefully I will get there, but to take away my rock, my friends and my source of recovery would only mean disaster.' Wendy Rose

'Service users and their families state that the staff at Ditchmore Lane provide acceptance, safety and a feeling of trust. It's a place to rebuild confidence. I personally have witnessed the good work they do there.' Sandra Newberry, Carers in Herts

meeting of the Joint Commissioning Partnership Board. Imagine our shock when we went along to the Board meeting and discovered that our questions about Ditchmore were missing from the formal papers! The public are not allowed to speak at Board Meetings but, on this occasion, the Chair allowed the Ditchmore Delegates a voice to get the answers they needed.

So where are we now? The whole process has caused a lot of distress which has impacted badly on our health but there is a positive outcome. Wayland Lousley of the JCT and Anne Markwick of HPFT have agreed to keep Ditchmore running normally and to take on new referrals for the time being. The JCT will undertake a review of day services across Hertfordshire, in partnership with HPFT, service users and carers, which will be 'progressed transparently'.

Our hope is that more service users will get involved in running and developing mental health services. In particular, we would like a crisis house to be set up locally. We have shown how, by working together, service users can effectively challenge decisions made about their care. We are very grateful to all those who have helped us. Now it's our turn to help others. Our message is: get together, don't give up and keep asking questions! If you need help to save or change your services, please call the Viewpoint office on **01707 328014** and they will put you in touch with us. Ditchmore Delegates deliver!

Delivering Race Equality

Funding continues after 2010! That was the good news announced at the fourth annual Delivering Race Equality in Mental Health conference. The work of Community Development Workers (CDWs), who reach out to black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, will develop and more ambassadors will be appointed to ensure the views of BME service users and carers are taken into account in service planning. For more information, go to www.mentalhealthequalities.org.uk. Viewpoint is working with Julie-Jaye



Christiana Ashare

Charles, Chief Executive of Equalities National Council of Disabled People, towards appointing an Equality Ambassador for Hertfordshire.

If you are from a BME community and would like to discuss how mental health services can be improved, you are welcome to call Christiana at Viewpoint on **01707 328014**.



Fancy dress at Hertford Castle!

Mind in Mid Herts has new premises in Hertford. To meet local people and highlight the link between good mental and physical health, staff teamed up in February with the British Heart Foundation for a fancy dress walking event around the grounds of Hertford Castle. For more information call **01727 865070**.

Viewpoint completes Recovery Research



Final report
30th January 2009

A team of Viewpoint researchers has successfully completed a research project on 'Recovery Based Outcomes'. Commissioned by the East of England Strategic Health Authority (SHA) and the Care Services Improvement Partnership, Chris Munt, Andrew H Smith, Suzanne Nash and Angela Johnson set up listening events to learn from numerous people with experience of mental health problems how they view their recovery journey. This information was then collated with previous research on recovery to identify five indicators to monitor if mental health services are delivering recovery based practice. The research was given a thorough review by the Experts By Experience Group from the

Eastern Region to back up the findings and will subsequently be used across the Eastern Region to monitor services.

'We are very pleased with the extent to which Viewpoint considered the vast array of theories and research that underpin what we now think of as 'recovery' and apply this to the direct experiences of people who use mental health services throughout the region. In combination with the regional Mental Health Delivery Board, we hope that the work Viewpoint has undertaken will help us arrive at a common understanding of what recovery orientated services should look like and how those who use services can be involved in monitoring them.'

Jess Lievesley, East of England SHA

Personality Disorder Service: update

The Community Personality Disorder Service is based at St Peter's House, St Albans, and will focus initially on service users referred by Community Mental Health Teams. We will provide a tailored service and treatment to people with a diagnosis of personality disorder as well as do a lot of staff training which will include service user trainers. For example, exploring how practitioners inform their clients about their diagnosis face to face, and in a positive manner has considerably more value with a service user present.

We can also explore attitudes around personality disorder. For example, the idea that some personality disorders 'burn out' over time and some people get better can be a confusing message. The more positive reality is that many people will acquire the necessary life skills over time, utilising their own resources, with the result that they will no longer meet the diagnostic criteria for a personality disorder: it is part of a person's development. The message that treatments like Dialectical Behaviour Treatment (DBT) can speed this process up is a lot more accurate, constructive, and hopeful and is one of the treatments that we will be offering. It is an interesting and effective form of therapy

which seems to work well for people who self-harm and who have difficulties asserting themselves and maintaining and developing important relationships. It can allow some people to go on to other forms of psychological therapy.

Most of our vacancies have been filled and I would like to acknowledge the tremendous support given to this fledgling team by Viewpoint, present throughout all the interviewing and discussions about appointing. In particular, I would like to thank Chris Munt, Martin Bragg and Suzanne Nash.

The service has now opened but we only have a small number of places to cover all of Hertfordshire and much of our role is about supporting the other community teams' best practice. Our work with service users will take place across the county because only a small proportion of our clients will be able to reach us at St Albans. It is expected that many people referred to us will have problems with alcohol and other substance misuse, but this does not in itself prevent referrals being accepted. The important thing is that our service users can make use of the work we do, remember meetings and sessions, and be willing to try things out that are agreed.

Timothy Acton

Head of Community Personality Disorder Service

Suicide Prevention Strategy

Launched in March 2009, The Hertfordshire Multi-Agency Suicide Prevention Strategy brought together Viewpoint and a wide range of organisations, working to achieve the following goals:

- Reduce suicides in key high risk groups
- Promote mental wellbeing
- Reduce the availability and lethality of suicide methods
- Improve the reporting of suicide in the media
- Promote research on suicide and suicide prevention
- Improve monitoring of progress towards the national target of reducing suicides by at least 20% by 2010

Help line numbers

Samaritans 08457 90 90 90

email: jo@samaritans.org

www.samaritans.org

Cruse Bereavement Care in Hertfordshire

Tel No: 01707 278389

Viewpoint's AGM



Ben Shepherd, Duke McKenzie and Leigh Bailey

Attended by over 150 people, we held our AGM on 28th November 2008 and celebrated the previous year's achievements before voting in the new committee members. Our guest speaker, Richard Pacitti, Chief Executive of Mind in Croydon, gave a presentation about its Boxercise Project run

by world champion boxer, Duke McKenzie. The aim of the project is to improve self esteem, confidence and mental well being as well as physical health. Poor physical health is very common in people with mental health problems and there is evidence that exercise can be as effective as psychological therapies for people suffering from depression.

Viewpoint Committee

Chris Munt - Chair, Brian Luck - Vice Chair, Corinna Scott, Margot Holmes-Smith, Jacqui Lynskey, Richard Johnson, Chris Wright, Leslie Billy, John Carling, Simon Chivers, Alan Fountain



POSTNATAL ILLNESS

A JOURNEY UNIQUE TO MOTHERHOOD

A one day workshop on 16th may 2009

Using a variety of talking and creative exercises, the workshop explores the journey from womanhood into motherhood. Women will explore their pre-birth, birth and post birth experiences. Time will be devoted to expressing the unspoken trauma of having postnatal illness and its crippling effect on the family. The workshop culminates in looking at how women can understand their experience of postnatal illness and move forward with a more positive outlook.

For further information contact:

Charlotte Wilmer-Barbrook
01727 826627

Yvonne Adams
01727 853400

www.postnatalillnesscounselling.co.uk

Surviving the school gate

What would have made life easier? I was suffering from psychosis, my children were being bullied at school, the other parents were avoiding me and my life was falling apart.

Many things had led up to this point in my life, including untreated post natal depression. I had separated from my husband, moved home and, as a single parent with three children, my anxiety about their welfare overwhelmed me. I started to see and smell things that weren't there. I stopped eating and taking care of myself and my home. My children's routine became disrupted and I felt guilty and a bad mother. Their safety was paramount to me but I became too protective.

My children were taunted in the playground about me and they didn't have anyone at school to explain what was happening. The walk there was a nightmare. The other parents would start sniggering and giving me a wide berth and calling out insults. In the end, my family stepped in and I was taken into hospital. I was terrified I would lose my children and the relief when I was told by someone from Adult Care Services not to worry, that they were there for me, was immeasurable. My ex-husband was able to look after them but there was little support available for him. The other parents only asked questions for gossip, not to find out if he needed help.

I know it can be frightening for other people meeting someone who is in extreme mental distress. I broke down in front of the headmistress but she couldn't cope with the emotion and I wasn't asked back to discuss support for myself or my children. I felt so scared of the response of staff and parents that, on one occasion, I hid in the bushes near the school at home time. I frightened the life out of a mother who came across me unexpectedly.

If you don't know how to talk to someone at the school gate like me, a friendly smile and non intrusive chit chat helps. It's what I would have liked. If you see me on my own in the playground, just come and stand nearby. Keep the conversation neutral. Talk about the weather or, even better, say something nice, give a compliment. Make me feel needed by asking my advice. Please don't ask me if I'm ok. It makes me feel paranoid about how I look, that it must be really obvious I've got mental health problems.

If I don't give you eye contact, please don't give up. Just give me a bit more personal space. Standing there, just being with me, helps to calm me. It makes me feel less isolated. Nothing is worse than someone leaving straight away. Give me time, like a child or an animal, to build up trust and then I am able to respond to you.

My life is getting better now but there is still a great need for more information, care and compassion not only for mothers with mental illness but their children and fathers and grandparents as well.

Travis Holtby was talking to Jacqui Deakin

Mental Health Awareness for Schools

I am a service user trainer and executive administrative support worker with Viewpoint. On January 22nd, Tracy Kinsella from Viewpoint, Ian Carter from Mind in Mid Herts and myself gave a training session on mental health awareness to 32 students aged 16 and over at Barclay School in Stevenage.

Ian started the session by talking about how good physical health can help to maintain good mental health. He also spoke about Mind in Mid Herts's "Exercise to Health" project, which aims to promote good physical and mental health amongst its service user clients. It is funded by Time to Change, a national campaign challenging stigma and discrimination faced by



Barclay School's Henry Moore sculpture

people experiencing mental illness. Ian concluded his presentation by showing the current Time to Change national television advertisement

Tracy then held an interactive session with students on common myths around mental health. She explained how recovery from mental health problems is possible and that mental health problems are not a sign of personal weakness.

Following on, I spoke about my own personal experiences of schizophrenic breakdowns, explaining the

nature of my delusional thoughts, persecutory ideas and hallucinations. This seemed to shock quite a few of the students and staff alike! Personally, I gained a lot of satisfaction from demonstrating to the students and staff that someone who had experienced severe mental health problems was able to live life to the full despite them.

Overall, the session seemed to go extremely well and the students were very interested, asking lots of questions afterwards. It was a privilege to be able to address stigma with a young group of people. Ian reported afterwards that 15 of the 32 students had stayed behind afterwards to have a physical health check with him, including taking blood pressure readings and measuring weight. Tracy, Ian and I are hoping that more schools may take up the opportunity of receiving this type of training in the future.

Suzanne Nash

Contacts

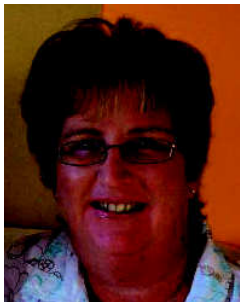
Exercise to Health Project: Ian Carter at Mind In Mid Herts on [01727 865070](tel:01727865070)

Viewpoint: To book a service user trainer call Tracy Kinsella [01707 328014](tel:01707328014)

Useful website: www.youngminds.org.uk

Early Intervention in Psychosis service by Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust:
Chris Coffey [01442 275460](tel:01442275460) or [01992 705857](tel:01992705857)
emailus2day@yahoo.co.uk

Linda's 6 'A's of living with Bipolar Disorder



I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 1997. It has taken quite a few years to learn about the disorder and how it affects my family and me – everyone is different! I believe by sharing our experiences we can learn to make life a little easier. I have listed below some aspects of how I live with bipolar disorder; it may well also apply to other problems.

Accepting the illness and understanding it

- Building a knowledge of the illness and how it affects you and others around you. Maybe joining a local MDF The Bipolar Organisation self support group www.mdf.org.uk, 08456 340 540, and using the internet to gain knowledge.
- Accepting the observations of health professionals, family and friends as concern/help and not a criticism.

Asking and gaining help and support

- Getting support from people close to you and building up trusting relationships.
- Writing things down in a diary, which may help you work through problem periods, or help explain how you feel when you see a doctor.

Adapting lifestyle

- Avoiding your known stressors.
- Sleeping at regular times.
- Healthy eating – maybe more oily fish or taking omega 3 oils.
- Limiting alcohol and caffeine.
- Getting exercise.

Adhering to medication

- Understanding what the medication is doing, and believing the medication is working. Accepting it may be long-term medication. Making sure the medication is monitored correctly – especially when on drugs like lithium.

Allowing time for yourself

- Avoiding rushing around.
- Taking regular exercise – even a short walk in the fresh air.
- Meeting friends for social activities etc.
- Having a break or rest during the day.
- Not feeling guilty about having time to yourself.

Action plan

- Having a plan set out in writing for when things become unstable including information such as contact telephone numbers, current medication, preferences of treatment eg to be treated at home if possible. This could be made with the help of health professionals and family and friends.

Linda Stoneman

I have written a short book about some of my experiences of the illness called "From Heights to Depths and Somewhere in Between" which can be purchased from www.chipmunkapublishing.co.uk for £10.



Central Herts MDF Bipolar Self Help Group Inaugural Meeting

The inaugural meeting of the Central Herts MDF Bipolar Self Help Group took place in Stevenage on Saturday 17th January 2009. The meeting was attended by Nabina Mitra from MDF Head Office, Phil Alsop the facilitator of the Cambridge MDF group, Angela Chalmers from Viewpoint and 14 service users and partners. The focus of the meeting was on recruiting volunteers to help run the group.

Subsequent meetings will be on the 4th Saturday of each month and will be held in Stevenage town centre from 10.30am - 12.30pm. There are good transport links.

For further details please contact Linda on [07727 725311](tel:07727725311)

Kara - The best Community Psychiatric Nurse in the world!

First, let me say the biggest thank you I have got to Kara. I do not know how I would have coped over the last awful year, 2008, without my darling Kara. Nothing is ever too much for her. She listens, she helps, she suggests and, you know what, she never judges and her mood never changes. Even if she is maybe having a bad day herself, you could never guess.

Kara has helped me now for 5½ years, from coming out of hospital to coping with the death of my father, to going back to work. She was also around last year when I had time off work for physical problems too. Kara has been there for me, helping, talking, listening and making me strong and able to cope with all sorts of things that were occurring in the worst year of my life for a very long time. I thank her so, so much for all the support she has given me over the past 5 years and let me say to you Kara, you are one extra special person and thank you for being you.

Tina

Getting Back to Work



In May 2006, I saw an advert in the local paper to do volunteer training with Herts Mind Network (HMN). I had been on my own journey with mental health disorder for ten years and felt that I was, at last, ready to use my experience to help others who might be struggling. I had trained as a transpersonal

therapist and self-development workshop teacher and was keen to start work. However, the seven years I had spent away from the work place whilst bringing up my children, combined with a relapse after the birth of my second child, had taken their toll on my confidence. Looking back, it took courage to respond to the advert, but that one small step was to open the door to a future of opportunities.

During autumn 2006, I completed courses in volunteer training and counselling skills at HMN. Interacting with people in a workplace environment really helped to build my confidence. Learning to value my illness for the gifts that it had brought me, such as greater understanding, strength and compassion became a key feature of my recovery journey. Having these

qualities respected by the staff at HMN helped to combat some of the shame I had felt about my illness, and to truly believe that I could contribute something valuable to wider society.

I began to work as a volunteer at HMN's Thursday evening drop-in. Assuming a position of responsibility within a team, and focussing my attention on helping others, was a gentle and supportive way in which to return to work.

Then, in July 2007, I found out that I had been successful in my application for a part-time post as Groups Coordinator for HMN in Dacorum. I will never forget that moment when I took the call, standing in a car park with my sister, tears pouring down our faces. There had been times in my life when just staying alive had seemed like an insurmountable task,

let alone going back to work.

Since then, I have given talks about my experiences at a number of events including a talk at St Alban's Abbey on the role spirituality can play in recovery. In December 2008, I felt confident enough to become fully self-employed as a transpersonal therapist and workshop facilitator. It was very sad to leave such a wonderful team of colleagues and friends, but they were very supportive of my decision.

I look back now and find it hard to believe how far I have come from that patient in a psychiatric hospital who cut her wrists and dreamt of death as her only escape from the darkness. Now my life is filled with the light of hope, and if my story can be a beacon to inspire others still struggling, then that is a gift I am truly grateful for.

Annabel Campbell

Artwork

Octopus by John Church



Media Monitors

How does the way the media report mental health issues affect you? Would you like to challenge negative stories and promote positive ones? Viewpoint has funding for a media project to create positive links with local press and radio to challenge stigma and discrimination and promote mental wellbeing. If you would like to get involved, contact Jacqui Deakin on [01707 328014](tel:01707328014).

A new lease of life

My name is Lisa. I am 33 and a single Mum with a five year old son. I fell very ill in January 2008 although I think it started back in the summer of 2007. There was scaffolding outside the flats where I live and fast cars playing loud music and scooters continuously going past my flat day in, day out, night after night. I thought that people – perverts – were watching me from the scaffolding and that the police were watching my every move and that any day they were going to arrest me. I also thought the local council workers were watching me too.

I found myself putting blankets over my normal curtains and blinds to block out the perverts from watching me. I was so ill but didn't realise how bad it actually was. (Unknown to me, I was hearing voices.) My Mum and the rest of the family noticed a big change in me. I lost weight, couldn't be bothered to have a bath, wash, do any washing up, wash any clothes, do any housework whatsoever and lacked interest in everything. My Mum marched me off to the doctors. It was horrendous. I really didn't want to be alive. I hoped the world would end. I hoped the world would swallow me up and that would be the end of it.

But my lovely little boy kept me alive. I

knew I had to try and pull through for him. I was always late taking and picking him up from school because I thought everyone was watching me.

Now I feel on top of the world. I feel great since I've been attending Guideposts Trust in Borehamwood and finding out about



Viewpoint. They have given me a new lease of life, socialising with other people and offering really good courses. I attend a weekly art class. I've done a one day first aid course and an excellent confidence building course

run by Viewpoint. In January, I started an assertiveness course and a coaching and mentoring NVQL3. I went by myself and enrolled on two computer courses which I have completed. Now my aim is to work with people with mental health problems. I would really like to thank Guideposts Trust and Viewpoint and my family for helping me through the really tough times I faced.

Lisa Brisco

Church communities and mental health awareness

On 20th January a group of twenty-five clergy and pastoral workers from Churches Together in Stevenage met for two hours of training with Viewpoint trainers Tracy Kinsella, Kay Watts and myself, Sharn Tomlinson, Counselling

recovery approach can ameliorate the effects. Interaction with delegates made this a lively, informal session. From her experience as a counsellor, Sharn was able to give advice about good practice when caring for a person threatening suicide.

up work, such as user-facilitated discussion groups, would be beneficial in helping clergy to feel more confident about helping people in mental distress who approach them.

David Norman

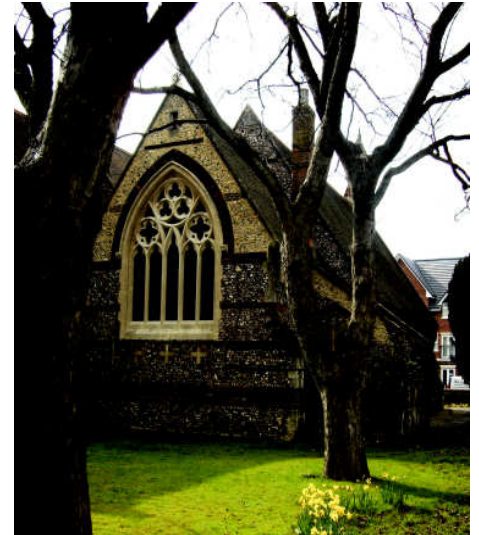


Coordinator at Mind in Mid Herts, and Michael Silver, an advocate from PohWER. Tracy and Michael gave an overview of mental health problems people encounter, explaining how the

Kay and I gave accounts of our experiences of living with periods of mental distress and particularly giving examples of how we had been helped and supported, or hindered, in our recovery by our church communities. Suggestions are set out below.

There was very little time for discussion before the session came to a close, which was a pity because the delegates made it clear that the subject was important to them and relevant to their work. The concept of 'recovery' was new to many and introduced a hopeful note into their understanding.

The feedback was really positive and there were suggestions that some follow-



Mental health awareness: tips for church communities

Helpful

- The opportunity to be a member of a caring community where one can find general acceptance and compassion, and feel supported by prayers, even though one's problems may not be fully understood.
- Having a personal befriender or 'soul friend' from within the church community who gives emotional and practical support.
- Knowing that clergy and lay ministers are pastorally present at crisis times and sensitive to the situation.
- Being made aware of the underlying universal themes applicable to all humankind (such as the healing power of forgiveness), which can be accessed through scripture and preaching.

Unhelpful

- A tendency amongst clergy to hand the situation over completely to mental health professionals thus failing to address spiritual issues that have relevance to a person's mental health.
- Lack of appreciation amongst clergy that genuine spiritual awakening (sometimes appearing as a crisis) can accompany pathological episodes of mental distress, and that this can result in a very personal spiritual questioning, which needs to be met empathetically.
- Clergy attempting to address such spiritual turmoil by rather dogmatic 'teaching of the faith', rather than validating the person's own (often strange) experiences and then accompanying them on their particular personal search for meaning and purpose.

David Norman

Could you be a Lay Pastoral Visitor?

- Do you enjoy spending time with people?
- Are you a good listener?
- Do you have a lively and relevant faith in God?
- Could you spare a few hours each week to visit mental health patients in hospital or residential units?

If the answer is yes, then perhaps mental health pastoral visiting is for you. This is part of the new Spiritual Care Programme being developed by Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust. We offer training and regular support and supervision.

For more information, call Rev Verity Harvey, Spiritual Care Co-ordinator on **01727 829468** or **07827 873094**
verity.harvey@hertspartsft.nhs.uk

Artwork

Turtle by John Church



rethink

**Are you looking to help in your community?
Have you got what it takes to be a friend?
If so – we need you!**

We are a charity providing support for people with severe mental illness and carers in the community across East Herts. Currently, we have many people waiting for a befriender. It takes just one or two hours a week or a fortnight to make a positive difference to someone's life simply by being a friend. This could be going out for a cup of tea, a walk, lunch or simply just chatting.

If you would like to get involved, we provide free training. There is no obligation to volunteer following the training if you do not feel the work is suitable for you.

We also run carers support meetings every second and fourth Thursday 1.30pm – 3.30pm in Ware.

To find out more, call Rethink on **01920 463663** or email rethinkcompanions@rethink.org

For Befriending, ask for Alison or Gareth.
For Carers' Support, ask for Carol.

Vacancies on Service User Council

As Chair of the Service User Council of Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust (HPFT), I would like bring to your notice our intention to increase our membership. The Council's function is to represent the lived experience of mental health service users and use it to constructively influence the operation and decision making of HPFT.

We meet every six weeks for two and a half hours, with some preparatory reading required. We have a full agenda that is usually both varied and stimulating. The Council is made up of service user members, two observers from user lead organisations and invited representatives from HPFT. It is only user members who can vote.

The Council does not have a veto in respect of HPFT's activities, but we challenge items not in users' best interests and have been successful in persuading HPFT to re-visit and re-consider in a number of cases.

If this has whetted your appetite and you would like to learn more, please contact Jo Burnham, Public and Patient Involvement Lead at HPFT **01727 897761**. Attendance of meetings and preparation time is paid at £10 an hour, in line with HPFT's Involvement Policy. Reasonable travel expenses are also paid.

Chris Munt



Horticultural therapy

A project based at Letchworth Healthy Living Centre

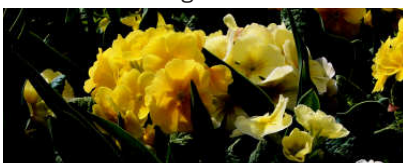
**Like gardening?
Like being outside?**

Then let the 'Growing People' Project help you improve the quality of your life!

This horticultural therapy project provides services for people with mental health issues in Hertfordshire (mainly N Herts and Stevenage). Those attending use gardening to work towards an agreed set of objectives eg social, work related, self confidence.

- Currently running morning and afternoon sessions on Mon to Thurs
- No funding required
- Professional or self referral

Please contact John Cliff on **07764 940812** or email john.cliff@talktalk.net to find out more details or arrange a visit



Influencing the commissioners!

The Joint Commissioning Partnership Board has decided to change its approach to the quarterly meetings that it holds with the public. Future meetings will not be aligned with specific partnership board meetings. This means that it will be possible to look further ahead so that public views can be canvassed as early as possible and help influence proposals as they are developed. Surgery sessions will take place alongside the main meeting so there will be opportunities to ask questions and make comments. The next public meetings will be in August and November 2009. To find out more, contact Gill Hague Tel: **01438 843232** gill.hague@hertscc.gov.uk

Would you like to improve mental health services in Hertfordshire?

Viewpoint's purpose is to use the views and expertise of people who use or have used mental health services in Hertfordshire to bring about change for the better. We help interested groups and individuals to get involved in the development, provision and monitoring of mental health services. If you want to influence the future of services, we can support you to make a difference!

Viewpoint offers training and travel expenses for people who want to get involved and works with a group of trainers who give presentations about their road to recovery from mental ill health. We welcome contributions to this newsletter on a positive theme.

To find out more and receive the newsletter, please fill out the slip on the back page and return to us.

Viewpoint is a registered charity: number 1105423

Out of the Darkness

Ten months of self doubts.
It's got me again.
Could not walk 100 yards to buy food.
Energy level low.
Don't care if I wash or even get out of bed.
Daughter rings, I lie again.
'I'm fine' I say.
Back on the roundabout.
Feet stuck in clay.
It's lifted, with help from
Daughter, friends, support worker, CPN and Doc.
Sun is shining.
Feel like food.
I will get my hair cut and coloured.
Walk out.
Connect with nature.
Dig garden.
Feel the gentle breeze
On my face. Bliss.
I am returning to my old self.
Life is good.

Christine Harris

Living will not be the death of me.

What can I offer?
What can I say that will make one scrap of difference?
What can I do?
What is good about me?
What is bad about me?
Why do I ask these questions?
I know the answer but it is too painful to look.
What does real hate feel like?
What does real, true eternal love feel like?
I sit alone at my table, waiting for a miracle.
I want to crawl into a box and hide.
Why is it so hard for me to get on with life?
Clenched anxious fists, paralysed and tired.
So many lives so many problems.
In these days of no trust and in complete isolation.
Does it always have to be this hard?
I alone have to make the final choice.
I alone am my own best friend and my own worst enemy.
Words don't mean anything without action - I must start living.
I must start, doing, believing, achieving and living now.
Live now, now live. Go, try, feel, cry, hurt, touch, smile,
laugh, open up to possibilities, grab now and live.
Don't be afraid, just keep going, living will not be the death of me.

David Temple

'Dealing with mental illness' VIEWPOINT DVD!

Viewpoint has produced a DVD as a training tool for staff who want to gain an insight into mental illness from the perspective of those who use adult mental health services. It plays for 24 minutes and looks at:

- How it feels to experience mental illness
- What helps in the process of developing good mental health
- The way forward to improve mental health services

See the whole person and not just the diagnosis is the message.

If you would like more information about obtaining copies of the DVD, please contact Jacqui Deakin at Viewpoint on **01707 328014** or email jacqui@hertsviewpoint.co.uk



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